

Cunningham's Flour Mill, 1840-1848
Southwest Corner of 13th and Fenwick Streets
Augusta
Richmond County
Georgia

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PHOTOGRAPH

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

CUNNINGHAM'S FLOUR MILL

HAER GA-17

Location: SW corner of 13th and Fenwick Streets
Augusta, Richmond County, Georgia
UTM:
Quad:

Date of Construction: 1848-1849. Several additions.

Present Owner: Unknown

Present Use: Site only.

Significance: Cunningham's Flour Mill was among the earliest sties developed along the Augusta Canal. It operated from 1848, early in the development of the canal, until the early 1950s.

Historian: Alan J. Steiner, August 1977

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CUNNINGHAM'S FLOUR MILL

In late November 1848, John Cunningham purchased lots and water rights from the City of Augusta for \$3,000. [1] On a site at the end of the Augusta Canal, Cunningham erected a brick flour mill which began operations in 1849. [2] The building, topped by a monitor, was 3-1/2 stories high [3] (see Photo 1). The main part of the mill was 60 feet by 40 feet and contained four run of stones and other fixtures for flour milling. [4] Water from the Augusta Canal dropped approximately 11 feet on the mill's two overshot wheels and provided the power to turn the stones.

Ownership of the mill passed from sole ownership by Cunningham to the partnership of Cunningham and Linton. In 1855, John C. Carmichael owned the mill. At that time, Carmichael complained that poor water service was damaging his business. [5] Although the mill contained four run of stones, Carmichael could operate only three. The management of the business, then known as Carmichael Flour Mills, passed to Estes and Co., and then to Estes and Clark, a wholesale grocery firm. [6] By 1866, Charles Estes was ready to retire from business and enter politics. [7] The flour mills were offered for sale, and Clark formed a new partnership with W. T. Martin. The pair renovated the establishment and renamed the operation the Augusta Flour Mills. [8] John M. Clark & Co. gained control of the mill in January 1870. [9]

By 1870, the various owners had extended the main building to a length of 140 feet. [10] The additions to the original mill served as storerooms and warehouse space. [11] Arched openings on the front facade of the building permitted horses and wagons to enter and leave the storerooms and warehouse. [12] The company's offices occupied a 20' x 60' ell to the rear of the building. [13] In 1870, the mill employed 13 and operating day and night could produce 200 barrels of flour and 400 bushels of meal every 24 hours. [14] By 1878, Augusta Flour Mills had five run of stones and sold its products, including fancy "Gilt Edge" flour, in and outside of Augusta. [15]

The mill apparently went into receivership in 1890 and was held by the National Bank of Augusta. [16] The mill reopened in 1898 as the incorporated Clark Milling Co., headed by Jules . [17] The new owners increased the warehouse space of the company and sometime after 1915 built a three-story addition, which housed a corn shucker. [18] The Clark family had become in other businesses and soon dropped from the management entirely. [19] In 1913, J. Coleman Dempsey became president of the mill. He and Paul H. Dunbar, general manager since 1909, ran the mill until it closed in the early 1950's.

The mill was leveled around 1960, and only a few bricks remain as physical evidence of its existence. The company definitely used water power into the 1940s and probably never employed any other type of power. [20]

Footnotes

1. Report for November 3, 1848, Augusta Canal Record Book, I, Vault, Municipal Building, Augusta, Georgia.
2. See HAER Augusta Canal Project Report #1, Augusta Canal; Augusta Daily Chronicle and Sentinel, May 25, 1871, p. 3 (hereafter referred to as DC&S).
3. See woodcut in George White, Historical Collections of Georgia (New York, 1853), p. 598.
4. DC&S, May 25, 1871, p. 3; Report for September 5, 1855, Augusta Canal Record Book, II.
5. Report for September 5, 1855, Augusta Canal Record Book, II.
6. DC&S, May 25, 1871, p. 3.
7. For information on other activities of Estes, see HAER Augusta Canal Project, Report #1, Augusta Canal, and #4, the John P. King Manufacturing Co.
8. DC&S, January 3, 1866, p. 3; DC&S, August 24, 1866, p. 3.
9. DC&S, May 25, 1871, p. 3.
10. DC&S, May 25, 1871, p. 3.
11. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1884, Map Room, Sciences Library, University of Georgia, Athens.
12. See illustration of mill in Illustrated Augusta, The City of Opportunities (Augusta, ca. 1915).
13. DC&S, May 25, 1871, p. 3.
14. DC&S, May 25, 1871, p. 3.
15. The Handbook of Augusta (Augusta, 1878), pp. 33-4. By 1884, according to Sanborn maps, the company used 135 horsepower to drive 12 run of stones, 3 sets of rolls, 4 purifiers, 1 brush machine, 1 separator, 1 bran duster, and 1 Eureka smutter. The purifiers and bolting machines sat on the fourth floor, cleaning occurred on the third, and grinding on the first. The water power equipment and gearing were in the mill basement.
16. Augusta Chronicle, July 10, 1890, p. 8.

17. Rival had been a confectioner, among other things. He apparently had some financial interest in the mill prior to 1898, since the 1892 Yearbook of the City Council of Augusta lists "Augusta Flour Mill (J. Rival)" as a canal power user.
18. Fire Insurance Map, 1923.
19. The Clarks were involved in the Globe and Warwick Mills and later in a brick company. See HAER Augusta Canal Project, Reports #9 and #15, Globe Mills and Shamrock Mill.
20. See reports of Canal and Waterworks Superintendent in Yearbooks of the City Council, late 1930's and early 1940's.

Bibliography

City Documents

Augusta Canal Record Books I & II, Vault, Municipal Building, Augusta, Georgia.

Books

The Handbook of Augusta, 1878, August 1878.

Brief description of mill, with woodcut, pp. 33-4.

Illustrated Augusta, The City of Opportunities. Augusta, c. 1915.

Contains woodcut of Clark Milling Co.

George White, Historical Collections of Georgia, New York, 1853.